

Field day gives a glimpse into the past

By ANN SPANN

THE members of the Georgia Old Time Plow Club are dedicated to preserving early American agricultural ways and enjoying themselves while they're doing it. The club accomplished both during Farm Field Day at Scott and Judy Hancock's Nacoochee Valley Farm the last weekend in March.

Members used antique farm equipment drawn by horses and mules to plow, lay off rows and plant corn as crowds watched from behind the farm's split-rail fence. For some the experience was reminiscent of days growing up on a farm; for others it was a step into a living history lesson.

Club President Gene England considers the time he spends in the field behind a pair of draft mules relaxation as opposed to work. He organized the group 20 years ago and participates in about 12 events annually. "It gives us a chance to get away from business and relax," England says. "I really enjoy it."

Step back in time

Visitors enjoyed farm tours in horse-drawn wagons, buckboards and even a doctor's buggy. The farm features an 1840 dogtrot log cabin and an Amish barn, which was filled with local artists, heritage demonstrations and bluegrass musicians during the two-day event.

It was the third field day the Hancocks



MANNING THE PLOW: Seven-year-old Jakob Lindskoog, Deluth, Ga., tries his hand at plowing under the watchful eyes of Old Time Plow Club member Ronnie Wiley.

have hosted on their farm. "The field day kind of rode the coattails of the Amish barn raising," explains Scott Hancock, a local veterinarian.

Hancock practiced in an Amish community in Mount Hope, Ohio, early in his career. In January 2007, his friends and former clients traveled to Nacoochee Valley for the area's first traditional barn raising in more than 100 years. They used the same set of Amish barn plans that have been passed down in their families since the early 1700s.

"Over 600 people showed up to watch. The next morning I thought I

had dreamed the whole thing," Hancock says with a grin.

Hancock's dream for his farm is no secret among friends and fellow club members. "I think that's one of Doc's visions for this property: to let children experience the old ways," Keith Ivey says. He enjoyed watching his 9-year-old son, Jacob, hammer a piece of hot iron on blacksmith Barry Stiles' anvil.

"I want kids to see where milk comes from, to be able to gather eggs, help feed the horses and maybe bring their parents back on the weekend," Hancock says.

Hancock is a man who by his own admission was born 200 years too late. He speaks enthusiastically about the resurgence of small farming using horses and mules and how agritourism is one of the fastest-growing small businesses in the country.

Historical haven

Hancock's farm is nestled in the Blue Ridge Mountains on Highway 17 in Georgia's Nacoochee Valley. The area is a historian's dream, littered with state historical markers.

Overlooking the farm is the White Methodist Church founded in the 1820s by the valley's first white settlers. Located one mile west is the Nacoochee Indian Mound, which was the center of the ancient Cherokee town of Gauxule visited by DeSoto in 1540. About two miles south on Duke's Creek is the site of Georgia's first gold discovery in 1828.

The area is also a popular tourist destination with the reconstructed alpine village of Helen located only a few miles west of the farm and the Sautee Junction about the same distance to the east. The junction is home to the Old Sautee Store founded in 1872 and a variety of shops that offer unique mountain merchandise and contemporary crafts.

The Hancocks will host the next Farm Field Day on Nov. 8. Just look for the cabin and windmill.

Spann writes from Crestview, Fla.



MAKING THE ROUNDS: Not rain nor mud could dampen the spirits of Scott Hancock and his Percheron draft horses, Bill and Bob, during Farm Field Day.



OLD WAYS, MODERN FUN: Georgia Old Time Plow Club members demonstrate mules and hand plows during the Nacoochee Valley Farm Field Day.

Wanderlust wanders off thanks to airline hassles

RECENTLY, it hit me like a bull in a loading chute; my wanderlust now is a go-home lust.

Travel is less enjoyable than a case of hemorrhoids. Actually, sitting on an airplane for four hours before taking off on a two-hour flight caused a flare up in that respect.

I remember my first commercial flight. I was at the National Boy Scout Jamboree in Idaho. We rode a bus from Mobile, Ala., to Idaho, spent one night at the Airforce Academy, saw Neil Armstrong's giant leap on the moon, ate at a real Hawaiian luau and flew home on a big jet. The plane was spacious, the food good. The trip out took a week; the trip home lasted five hours. The flight attendants were gorgeous. I never knew women had legs that long until I saw



them in short dresses and heels.

A decade later I began traveling on business. My first flight was from Chattanooga. I walked up to the counter. A lady showed me a diagram of an airplane with stickers on it. I pointed to a sticker; she peeled it off and stuck it on my ticket. That was my seat. I flew to Atlanta. They gave us a sandwich and a soft drink, and the seats were comfortable. I stuck my briefcase in a shelf over the seats that had a rubber strap that

kept everything in place. In Atlanta I repeated the process to fly to Chicago. That was a full three decades ago.

One day recently I got to the airport two hours before my flight home. We got away an hour late, which in airline terms is nearly an on-time departure. I made it back to Atlanta; my suitcase did not. The lady told me they could deliver it to my house. When I told her I lived 175 miles from the airport she gulped and said it might be three or four days. I waited two more flights for my bag.

Airlines send employees to liar's school to learn how to fib with a straight face. You can walk up to the gate when it is time to leave and no plane is at the gate. They will tell you, "We are scheduled for an on-time departure." One of my favorite stories: "They had to pres-

surize the cabin before we could board. That is a challenge if you open the doors on the plane."

That four-hour weather delay on the plane did me in. Didn't they have a weather forecast before we boarded? They were kind and let us watch a free movie. Wow! They gave us a bottle of water. What happened to a Coke and peanuts?

Well, I made some new friends and my luggage made the trip with me. The drive home was terrible. As I walked in the door I didn't know whether to kiss LP, the cat or the ground first.

Be it ever so humble, there's no place like home.

Born in U.C.L.A. (the Upper Corner of Lower Alabama), Player now lives and loves in Tifton, Ga.